

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1444

C O N F I D E N T I A L ISLAMABAD 4633

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PK, US, PFOR

SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH FOREIGN SECRETARY

1. I WAS CALLED TO THE MFA THIS MORNING, MAY 6, ON SHORT NOTICE BY THE FOREIGN SECRETARY. HE OPENED CONVERSATION BY NOTING THAT DURING OUR LAST MEETING I HAD REQUESTED EVIDENCE FOR THE GOP CHARGE THAT THE UNITED STATES WAS INTERFERING IN PAKISTAN'S DOMESTIC AFFAIRS. HE ADDED THAT AS I KNEW, THE PRIME MINISTER MENTIONED SPECIFIC EVIDENCE IN HIS SPEECH BEFORE PARLIAMENT. IN HIS LETTER TO SECRETARY VANCE OF MAY 2 HE ALSO HAD NOTED THAT THE GOP HAS "DISTURBING" EVIDENCE OF AMERICAN INVOLVEMENT WITH THE OPPOSITION. FOREIGN SECRETARY WENT ON TO SAY THAT THE GOP HAS DECIDED THAT AS A GOVERNMENT IT IS NOT BOUND TO HAND OVER THE EVIDENCE IT HAS ACCUMULATED TO THE USG. THIS ISSUE, HOWEVER, CAN CERTAINLY BE A SUBJECT OF CONVERSATION IF SECRETARY VANCE ACCEPTS THE GOP INVITATION TO VISIT PAKISTAN.

2. I RESPONDED THAT THE SECRETARY HAD HOPED TO MEET THE FOREIGN MINISTER AT THE CENTO MEETING WHERE THEY COULD HAVE A FULL AND FRANK DISCUSSION OF THIS ISSUE. AGHA SHAHI REPLIED THAT, AS WE KNOW, AZIZ AHMED WILL NOT BE ATTENDING THE MEETING IN TEHRAN. HE ADDED THAT
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IF SECRETARY VANCE CANNOT COME TO ISLAMABAD, THE FOREIGN MINISTER IS PREPARED TO CONSIDER GOING TO WASHINGTON FOR TALKS THERE WITH THE SECRETARY. AGHA SHAHI ADDED THAT AMBASSADOR YAQUB HAS BEEN INFORMED OF THIS POSITION. I REPLIED THAT IT HAS BEEN OUR VIEW THAT IT WOULD BE VERY HELPFUL TO REVIEW THE EVIDENCE THAT THE GOP CLAIMS TO HAVE AGAINST US BEFORE THE TALKS

BETWEEN THE TWO MINISTERS BEGIN. WITH THIS PRIOR PREPARATION WE BELIEVE THE TALKS CAN BE MORE USEFUL. CONVERSELY, IT WOULD BE MORE DIFFICULT TO HAVE A MEANINGFUL DISCUSSION IF WE DO NOT HAVE THE CHANCE TO EXAMINE THE EVIDENCE BEFOREHAND.

3. I THEN ASKED WHETHER THE GOP WOULD MAKE THE REPORTED EVIDENCE AVAILABLE AT THE TALKS BETWEEN THE TWO MINISTERS. AGHA SHAHI REPLIED THAT HE WAS NOT PREPARED TO ADDRESS THAT ISSUE. THE PRIME MINISTER GAVE SPECIFICS OF THE EVIDENCE IN HIS SPEECH AND WE WILL HAVE TO SEE WHAT HAPPENS IF THE TALKS DO TAKE PLACE.

4. FINALLY, I ASKED IF THE FOREIGN SECRETARY COULD TELL US WHY THE FOREIGN MINISTER DECIDED NOT TO ATTEND THE CENTO MINISTERIAL. AGHA SHAHI REPLIED "IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES, OUR PARTICIPATION IN CENTO WOULD BE SELF-CONTRADICTIONARY". HE ADDED THAT THE BBC HAS BEEN BROADCASTING APPEALS BY FORMER PAKISTANI GENERALS URGING THE MILITARY TO REVOLT AGAINST THE LEGALLY CONSTITUTED GOVERNMENT. HE ADDED THAT CENTO WILL BE DISCUSSING SUBVERSION AND COUNTER-SUBVERSION AND HOW COULD PAKISTAN PARTICIPATE IN SUCH TALKS WHEN A CENTO ALLY IS ENGAGING IN OPEN SUBVERSION IN PAKISTAN.

5. THE FOREIGN SECRETARY SAID THAT THE PAKISTAN AMBASSADOR IN TEHRAN WILL HEAD PAK DELEGATION AND WILL MERELY KEEP A "WATCHING BRIEF". AGHA SHAHI ADDED THAT AMBASSADOR YAQUB HAS BEEN INFORMED OF THIS POSITION. CONFIDENTIAL

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I SAID I WOULD PASS ALL THIS INFORMATION TO THE DEPARTMENT.

6. OUR INITIAL ASSESSMENT IS THAT THE GOP DECISION NOT TO SUPPLY US THE PURPORTED EVIDENCE IS A FURTHER STEP IN THE DE-ESCALATION--AT ONE LEVEL--OF THE ANTI-AMERICAN CAMPAIGN. BHUTTO'S MESSAGES TO THE SECRETARY, HIS LACK OF PUBLIC FOLLOW-UP ON HIS ANTI-AMERICAN CHARGE AND THE DECREASING MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE CAMPAIGN ALL INDICATE THE PRIME MINISTER FEELS IT WAS A SUCCESSFUL POLITICAL GAMBIT BUT THERE IS NO NEED TO KEEP IT AT A HIGH LEVEL FOR THE MOMENT. (IT IS ALSO AN INDICATION THAT THE GOP HAS NO EVIDENCE THAT WOULD WITHSTAND PUBLIC SCRUTINY.) WE FULLY EXPECT, HOWEVER, THAT HIS MINIONS IN THE PARTY WILL CONTINUE TO PLAY ON THE ANTI-AMERICAN THEME, AND IF THE PM THINKS IT USEFUL AT A FUTURE DATE TO AGAIN PERSONALLY LEVEL CHARGES AGAINST US HE WILL NOT HESITATE TO DO SO.

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